

**STRATEGY  
RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

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**A SUGGESTED DECISION-MAKING GUIDE FOR USE BY  
INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUPS IN DEVELOPING  
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPLEX  
CONTINGENCY CRISIS OPERATIONS**

**BY**

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## **USAWC STRATEGIC RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **A Suggested Decision-Making Guide for Use by Interagency Working Groups in Developing Policy Recommendations for Complex Contingency Crisis Operations**

**by**

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**25 April 1997**

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## ABSTRACT

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Development, coordination, and implementation of foreign policy through the use of the interagency process is vital to U.S. interests. The overwhelming trend of comments on the interagency decision-making process are negative. Many describe the system as inefficient, ineffective, and confusing. Personal and organizational biases carry great weight in a decision-making system that has little structure and does not provide decision-makers with holistic recommendations during crisis operations.

What is needed is a decision-making tool that transcends individual and groups biases. This guide for decision-making, coordination, and implementation should unite the diverse efforts of agencies, contribute to the development of holistic recommendations, and assist in executing and monitoring synchronized plans. This paper uses Graham Allison's Rational Actor, Organizational, and Governmental Politics Models and

Irving Janis's research to develop nine critical factors (information, requirements, alternatives, analysis, recommendations, accountability, synchronization, initiative, and versatility) that must be considered if one is to construct an effective interagency decision-making guide. The paper then establishes a nine step decision-making guide for use by interagency working groups that incorporates the critical factors.

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## ***THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES***

Development, coordination, and implementation of foreign policy is vital to U.S. interests. The National Security Council (NSC) and the interagency process (IAP), outlined in Presidential Decision Directive #2 (PDD#2), have molded the decision-making system through which agencies plan, coordinate, and monitor execution of U.S. policy abroad. PDD#2 describes a cooperative system of Interagency Working Groups (IWGs) that blend high quality decision-making and mutually supporting efforts into holistic, executable sets of synergistic actions in support of U.S. interests.<sup>1</sup> One CINC recently highlighted the importance of this system; “No longer is one agency in charge or can go it alone in implementing foreign policy....[T]he military must act in support of and in concert with other agencies....cooperation is essential.”<sup>2</sup>

The IAP operates on three levels simultaneously: day-to-day operations, policy development and review, and complex contingency crisis operations. Day-to-day operations and policy development are generally effective. But when it comes to crisis operations, despite the flowing words of the Presidential Decision Directive, ‘the emperor has no clothes.’<sup>3</sup> The overwhelming trend of comments on the interagency decision-making process (IADMP) are profoundly negative. In fact, many describe the system as inefficient, ineffective, and confusing. Some describe it as a hoax.<sup>4</sup> At the very least, IADMP appears to fall short of the mark when dealing with a crisis (a threat to U.S. interests, requiring a decision and response within a short reaction time, while only having incomplete knowledge of the threat and the situation).

In such crises, IWG decision-making support becomes extremely important. Executive decision-makers seem increasingly overwhelmed by responsibilities and information, and have less time to engage in detailed analyses. More trust is placed in the ability of an IWG to sift

through complex information and a wide variety of possible actions by multiple actors in order to recommend a policy action, then coordinate it and monitor its execution.

One would think that this kind of repetitive, complicated, strategic decision-making under time constraints would lead IWGs to develop a systemic guideline for assessing situations and developing recommendations. That is apparently not the case. Discussions with staffers in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and other prominent intellectuals that study IWG operations reveal that there is no common decision-making methodology. They, and others, describe the IADMP as ad hoc, seat-of-the-pants style thinking, not as a systemic process that assesses the situation and develops recommendations in some organized fashion.<sup>5</sup>

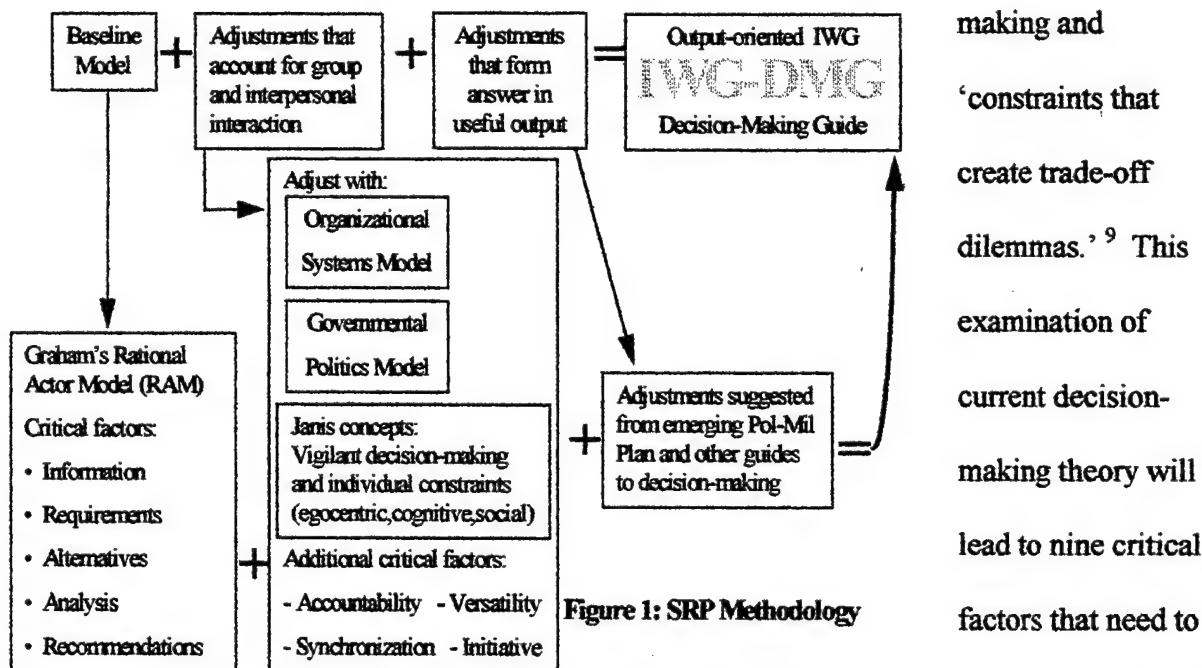
As Irving Janis states, “Time and again the major cause of unsuccessful outcomes is one that is very much under the leader’s control: *poor quality decision-making procedures used either to arrive at new policy or to reaffirm an existing policy.*”<sup>6</sup> If IADMP procedures are at fault, then one solution is to construct a guide to decision-making that assists IWGs as they attempt to develop, coordinate, and execute complex contingency operations under crisis conditions. This paper focuses on the IADMP at the IWG level during such conditions and operations. It first reviews current decision-making theory in order to suggest several criteria that should be considered when building a decision-making guide. Then a suggested IWG decision-making guide is established that conforms to these factors.

#### ***CURRENT DECISION-MAKING THEORY***

Graham Allison and Irving Janis have greatly contributed to the study of decision-making in the foreign policy arena. Allison applied both organizational and decision-making theory to the political process by discussing the Cuban Missile Crisis in terms of three frames of reference. Allison used the classical rational actor model (RAM) to describe an ideal decision-making

process. He then used an organizational process model to account for the effects of organizations on decision-making, and used a bureaucratic (also named ‘governmental politics) model to account for effects on decision-making due to individual actions and biases.<sup>7</sup> Janis examined foreign policy decision-making in terms of what he called ‘vigilant decision-making,’ and also added to the body of research on the effects of individuals on the decision-making process.<sup>8</sup> Both authors concluded that a comprehensive model of foreign policy development must start with a baseline model, then be adjusted to account for significant variables.

This paper will follow just such a methodology, as depicted in Figure 1. The RAM will be the baseline model. The Organizational Process and Governmental Politics Models will assist in accounting for key variables, as will consideration of Janis’s research on vigilant decision-



be considered in developing a decision-making guide. An IWG decision-making guide will then be developed.

making and  
‘constraints that  
create trade-off  
dilemmas.’<sup>9</sup> This  
examination of  
current decision-  
making theory will  
lead to nine critical  
factors that need to

### The Rational Actor Model (RAM)

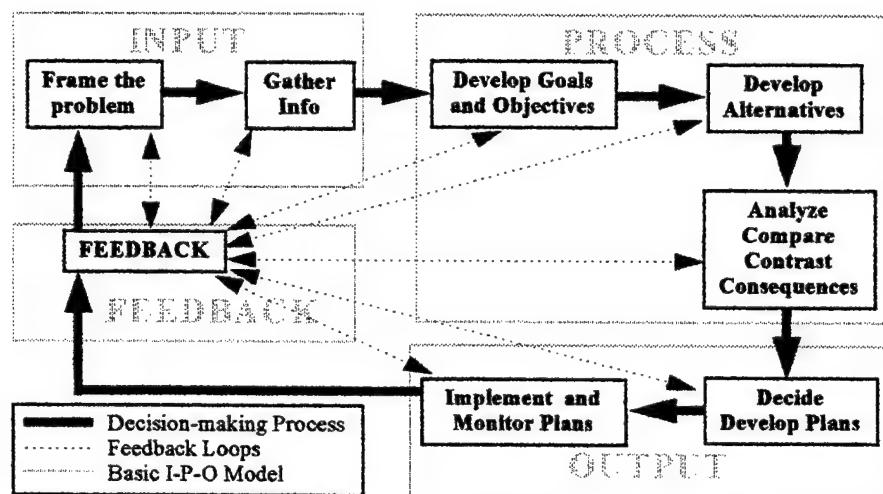
Since there is no written, systemic IADMP, one must be created. The RAM serves as the basic decision-making paradigm. The first five critical factors (information, requirements, alternatives, analysis, recommendations) that lay out the process in the decision-making guide come from the RAM. This model assumes that a unitary actor (the government, as represented by individuals from various agencies) makes national policy decisions in response to a threat or opportunity, in this case a complex contingency crisis. These decisions are the result of vigilant information search and logical, rational, problem-solving processes. Goals, interests and objectives are clearly stated. The “best,” most rational, value-maximizing choice is made to achieve ends after a comprehensive analysis is conducted of the widest range of options and resulting consequences.<sup>10</sup>

One needs to remember a key point concerning the RAM. It is an ideal synoptic model that assumes all information is known and all variables are understood. In its pure form, the RAM needs no feedback function since everything is known and used to maximize output. In fact, the IADMP or any other decision-making model, will always fall short of the ‘ideal.’ In reality, all information, alternatives, and consequences will never be known, and time and resources will not be available to ensure absolutely complete analysis. Finally, even if all information, time, and resources were to be made available, the IADMP would still probably not produce an optimal solution because it can not account for all variability.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 2 on the next page illustrates the RAM. First the problem is identified and all possible information concerning the issue is gathered. Next, goals and objectives are formulated in terms of “payoffs,” “utility,” or “preferences.” Then distinct alternatives are developed. Next, consequences (outcomes) are attached to alternatives. Then alternatives are compared in

terms of consequences in order to choose the alternative that ranks highest in the decision-maker's payoff function. Then plans for implementation are built and executed, making adjustments as necessary. The entire process is monitored using effective feedback loops.<sup>12</sup>

Janis's research validated Allison's RAM. Janis assumed that decision-makers try to the



**Figure 2: The Rational Actor Model (RAM)**

best of their abilities to arrive at the best decision possible, and make the best use of their information gathering and processing capabilities. Given these assumptions, several critical factors related to decision-making were

developed, including: comprehensive information gathering, development of a wide range of alternatives, in-depth analysis of consequences, and the use of coordinated plans.<sup>13</sup>

Several critical factors that should be used to build the process in any IWG decision-making guide flow from the research of Allison and Janis:

- INFORMATION-total situational awareness; intensive, continuous search for all past and present information, and projections for the future
  - REQUIREMENTS-develop clear goals and objectives
  - ALTERNATIVES-develop the widest possible range of comprehensive, holistic options which include integrated actions of all possible actors
  - ANALYSIS-list costs/benefits of each alternative; perform rigorous, unbiased analysis of each alternative; compare/contrast alternatives
  - RECOMMENDATIONS-provide detailed ends-ways-means plans; include contingency plans for likely situations that could occur

The view of a nation as a rational, unitary decision-maker falls short of a realistic view of U.S. foreign policy development. In order to serve as a more comprehensive model, the RAM

must be modified to account for, among other variables, effects caused by the organizations which make decisions.

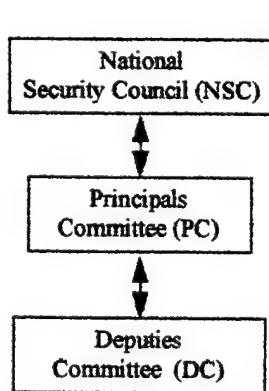
### The Organizational Systems Model

Government action can be considered as the actions of one or more organizations. In the organizational paradigm the unitary actor (the nation) is replaced with a ‘constellation of loosely allied organizations.’<sup>14</sup> Modification of the RAM due to additional critical factors (accountability, synchronization, and initiative) suggested by the Organizational Systems Model assists in building a more useful IWG decision-making guide.

Several key areas stand out when examining decision-making from the organizational perspective, including specialization, decentralized execution, and organizational protection. These three factors place pressure on the IADMP, resulting in less than optimal decisions, and must be accounted for in any decision-making guide.

Everyone can not know or do everything, nor can one organization centrally control all facets of policy execution. Issue complexity generally drives organizations to specialize in certain areas, to establish boundaries with other agencies on responsibilities and actions (sometimes called ‘turf’), to institute routinized SOPs and to decentralize policy execution. Specialization also implies lack of expertise in some areas, creating dependencies on other agencies for their expertise. Specialization can also lead to limited problem search, understanding, and development of alternatives due to the use of rigid organizational routines. Thus, while specialization enhances expertise, it can hamper the search for total situational awareness, impede development of alternatives, and exert resistance during coordination of actions between agencies.

Finally, specialization also implies responsibility and ‘ownership.’ Organizations want control in order to meet their own objectives (primarily to survive by retaining personnel and budget dollars). This may lead organizations to take one of two approaches. One the one hand, each organization perceives problems, develops options, and makes decisions in a somewhat independent, autonomous manner. Specialization and responsibility may lead to organizational protectionism (parochialism), which can increase resistance to coordinated action. The cure for this is increased reliance on interagency coordination in order to produce synchronized actions where foreign policy ‘effects’ are greater than the sum of independent agency actions.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, some organizations may respond to a crisis with, “Not my job.” This kind of ‘reverse parochialism’ also threatens total situational awareness, holistic alternative development, and effective interagency coordination. It can also lead to lack of initiative and creative thinking about problem-solving.



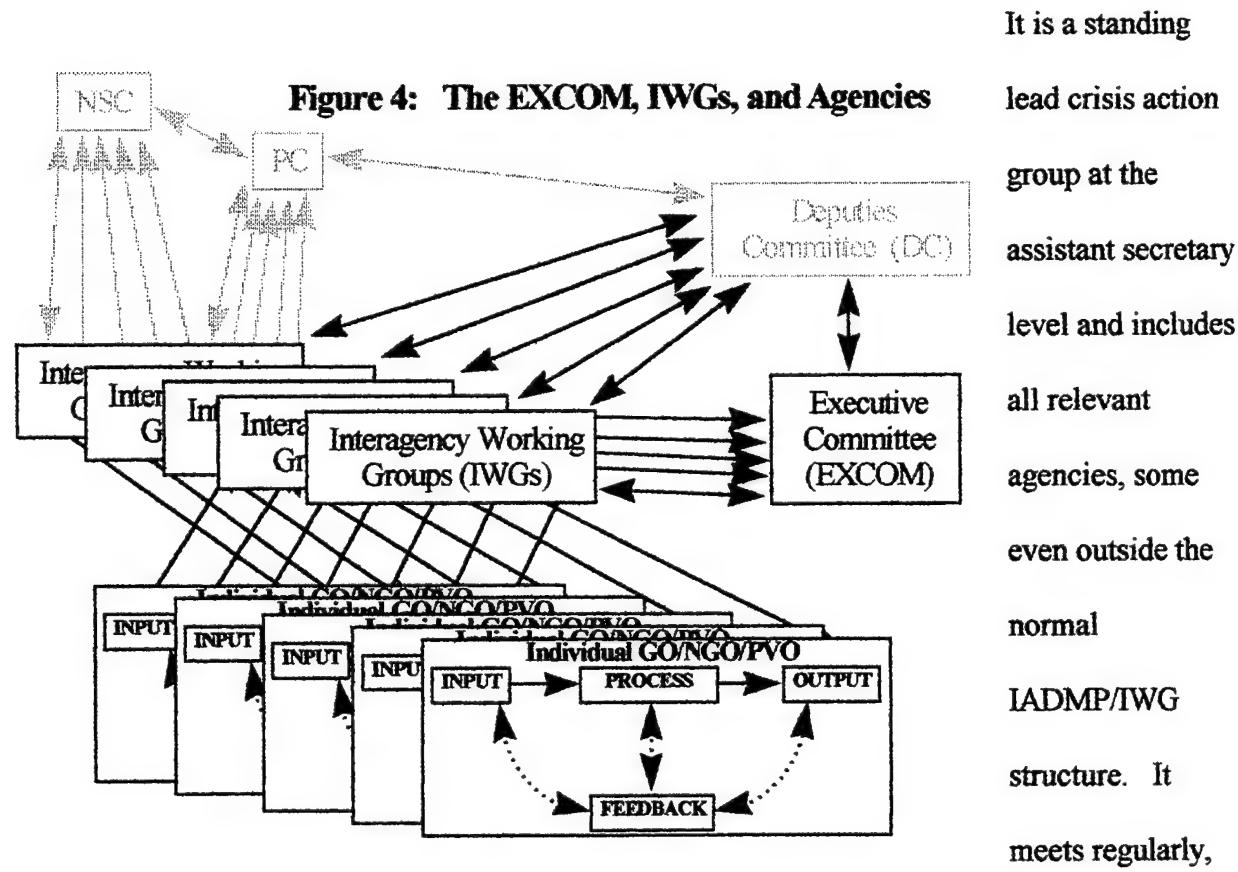
**Figure 3: NSC Executive Committees**

The NSC organization closely follows the Organization Model. The senior and mid-level NSC committees roles are outlined in PDD#2. The members of the NSC include the President and Vice President; the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury; the U.S. representative to the United Nations; the President’s Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor (NSA); and his Economic Policy Advisor. Both the Director for Central Intelligence (DCI) and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) are statutory advisors. Other personnel are invited as the situation dictates. The NSC is the senior cabinet level interagency forum for consideration of policy issues affecting national security and gives advice directly to the President.

The Principals Committee (PC) is also a senior cabinet level committee, chaired by the NSA, with attendance by all but the President and Vice President. The PC formulates and discusses options while leaving the President free to handle other matters.

The Deputies Committee (DC) is the senior sub-cabinet level interagency forum. It is chaired by the Deputy NSA and attendance includes the under-secretary/deputy level senior administrators from each principal represented in the NSC. The DC reviews and monitors the work of the IADMP, prepares issues for the PC, and is responsible for day-to-day crisis management.

The Executive Committee (EXCOM) was established by the DC for crisis management.



and is responsible for policy development, planning, and execution in crisis activities. It is also responsible for reviewing plans, monitoring operations, and conducting after action reviews.

Interagency Working Groups (IWGs) are established at the direction of the DC and can be either standing or ad hoc committees with membership drawn from the assistant secretary level of designated departments. IWGs are the principal mechanisms for identification and development of national security policy and issues. They are the first level of the IADMP where holistic alternatives can be developed, because they generally include membership from most agencies. IWGs also develop issues for the DC or EXCOM, and review, coordinate, and implement Presidential decisions in their areas. To complicate matters further, each agency is usually independently connected to most IWGs. There could theoretically be almost one hundred agencies involved in one crisis, each with their own parochial view and desire to affect the crisis on their terms.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 4 depicts the complicated nature of the IADMP. Organizational Model characteristics are readily apparent. In this regard, Henry Kissinger long ago noted that the salient failure of the organizational paradigm was that bureaucracy becomes an obstacle when its routines fail to allow decision-makers to address the widest possible range of information and issues.<sup>17</sup>

To overcome such obstacles, the RAM must be adjusted to account for the effects of organizations on decision-making. Suggested additional critical factors are:

- ACCOUNTABILITY-agency responsibilities must be clearly identified; all agencies must be held accountable for their actions and the coordination of their actions with others; lead agencies must be designated and supported by others
- INITIATIVE-agencies must proactively execute in accordance with the intent of the prescribed policy and/or plan; this includes proactive coordination with other agencies
- SYNCHRONIZATION-coordinated agency activities produce effects at the time and place and in the intensity desired, such that the sum of individual agency effects are greater than the effects of individual agencies taken alone

### The Governmental Politics Model

Variables that center on individuals and their actions in groups also affect the ideal decision-making of the RAM. These variables involve the Governmental Politics Model and the Groupthink Model. The Governmental Politics Model emphasizes that foreign policy is developed and implemented by a national government filled with people whose individual motivations affect foreign policy deliberations. The last critical factor to be considered in building an IWG decision-making guide, versatility, is drawn from this model.

Political leaders receive advice and recommendations from a centralized group of leaders who occupy top positions within their own organizations. Each ‘player’ comes to the negotiating table with his own desires, fears, knowledge, values, biases and abilities. Foreign policy development is serious business, and each of these persons fights for what he is convinced is right. In this model the ideal, value-maximizing function of the RAM (“What is best-for the nation?”) is changed to, “What is best-FOR ME?” Therefore, personal power and negotiation skills take on increased importance.<sup>18</sup>

It is possible to construct a Governmental Politics Model that centers on ‘player’ stand (viewpoint/opinion) and interaction. Actors are formed into groups, whose dynamics and culture in turn shape individual actions. The hierarchical arrangement of actors forms the government. An actor’s frame of reference colors alternative development and the weight assigned to factors in analysis. The policy ‘game’ devolves to bargaining sessions among players with separate interests, biases, and objectives. The weapons in the policy game are bargaining advantages, negotiating skills, other player’s perceptions of the first two ingredients, and communicative skills. Player ‘moves’ are formed by ‘action channels,’ regularized means of taking government action on a particular kind of issue. Action channels determine who plays, how they play, what

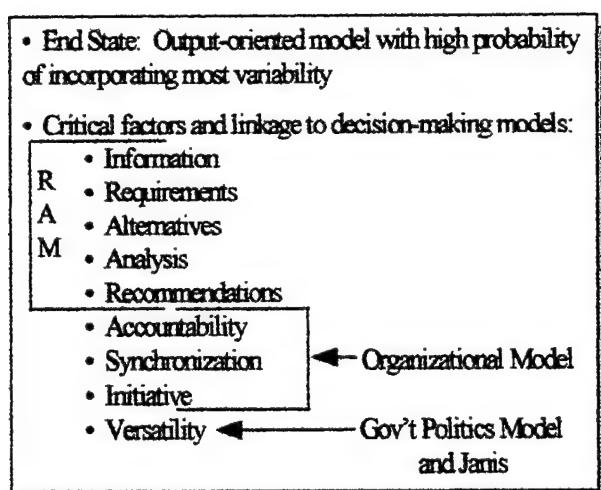
power they have in the game, and who has the lead in an action. Decisions and actions become the result of compromises between players whose personalities are affected by diverse interests and unequal influence. Policy games are played not only to solve foreign policy problems, but also to gain increased power, prestige and respect within their respective agencies and inside the central leadership circle. All these factors lead to rigid, myopic decision-making.<sup>19</sup>

Decision quality can also be affected by what Janis terms individual constraints that create trade-off dilemmas. These trade-off dilemmas are categorized into three areas: egocentric, cognitive, and affiliative. Egocentric constraints are individual pressures to realize personal ambitions, avoid frustration and damage to self-esteem, and cope with the pressure, fear, and anxiety related to decision-making. Cognitive constraints revolve around lack of knowledge and skills. Examples include failure to consider certain options, complete information searches, identify or measure costs or benefits, and/or failure to work out detailed implementation plans. A well-known cognitive constraint is to ‘satisfice,’ or accept less than optimum information, alternatives, analyses, and/or decisions. Affiliative constraints deal with pressures from a player’s affiliation with his organization. The most common affiliative constraint is ‘groupthink,’ when members allow the strong wish to preserve harmony in a group take precedence over the decision itself. Groupthink may cause gross omissions of information search, or failure to sufficiently develop, examine and analyze alternatives.<sup>20</sup>

To counter this, as well as the defects of the Governmental Politics Model, there is the need to consider one final critical factor in development of a decision-making guide:

- **VERSATILITY:** Ability of the process to be modified to fit individual preferences and still retain its capability to produce high quality decisions

Figure 5 illustrates the nine critical factors that will be considered in building an IWG



**Figure 5: Critical Factors for Consideration in Building a Decision-Making Guide**

guide is flexible enough to adjust for variability caused by different individual frames of reference. These critical factors and other sources are now used to suggest a format for an IWG decision-making guide.

decision-making guide. The top five factors are extracted from the RAM and provide the baseline process. The next three factors, accountability, synchronization, and initiative, suggest clear identification of responsibilities and comprehensive coordination between agencies to achieve synergistic results. The last factor, versatility, is added to ensure the

#### **A SUGGESTED IWG DECISION-MAKING GUIDE (IWG-DMG)**

<b>IWG-DMG</b>
Step 1: Receive/Understand the Problem, <b>Organize IWG</b> , and Prepare for Action
Step 2: Gather <b>Information</b> and Assess the Situation (Continuous real-time situational awareness)
Step 3: Determine <b>Goal, Objectives</b> , and Issue Planning Guidance (Focus IWG Activities)
Step 4: Develop <b>Holistic, Well-Defined Alternatives</b>
Step 5: Analyze, Compare, Contrast Alternatives and Draw Conclusions
Step 6: Make <b>Recommendations</b>
Step 7: Develop, Coordinate, <b>Synchronize</b> Final Plan, including Probable Contingency Options
Step 8: Publish and Rehearse Plan (Prepare to Execute)
Step 9: Execute and Monitor Plan; Anticipate changes; Continue to Refine Probable Contingency Options
<b>Adjust IWG-DMG as required throughout process</b>

**Figure 6: IWG Decision-Making Guide (IWG-DMG)**

The IWG-DMG is a nine step guide that begins with problem receipt and ends with execution and monitoring of an adopted plan. Steps 8 and 9 of the suggested DMG cover publication, rehearsal, execution, and monitoring of the “campaign plan.” Once the outline of the plan is decided,

OSD’s Generic Political-Military Plan serves as a framework for publication of the actual campaign plan. Emerging SOPs in the IWG process should cover rehearsals, monitoring of

execution, and feedback loops that provide opportunities to make adjustments where needed. As a consequence, the emphasis here is on Steps 1 through 7 and the use of the nine critical decision-making guide factors to examine those steps in detail.<sup>21</sup>

<b>IWG-DMG</b>
<i>Step 1: Receive/Understand the Problem, Organize IWG, and Prepare for Action</i>
1.1 Receive and understand the problem
1.2 Plan for IWG operations: identify members, organization, reporting chain, operating procedures, list issues associated with IWG operations (resolve as required)
1.3 Plan use of available time
1.4 Coordinate for and occupy adequate work space
1.5 Establish info/commo links to work space
1.6 Contact prospective IWG members: outline problem, establish information requirements, and coordinate meeting times/places (adjust membership as required throughout process)

**Figure 7: Step 1 - Receive/Understand the Problem, Organize IWG, and Prepare for Action**

#### Figure 7 highlights

Problem Receipt and Preparation for Action, the first step in the IWG-DMG. Note the influence of several critical factors and models from current theory.

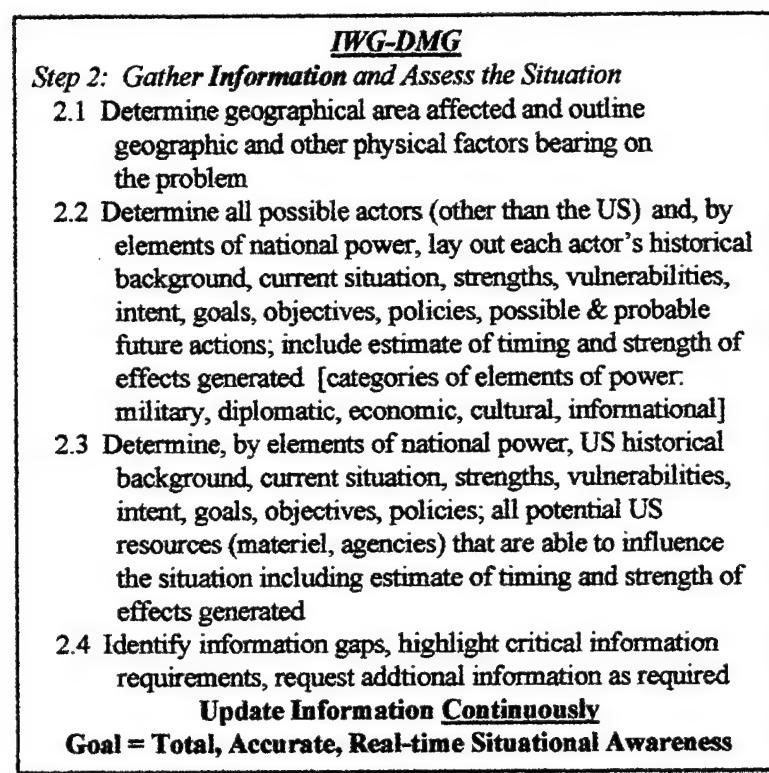
Critical factors such as

INFORMATION and application of all three theoretical models are seen even in this first step.

Establishment of communications networks directly relates to the critical factor of INFORMATION, and assists in later application of the first step of the RAM (Gather Information). Development of the IWG organization takes into account both key organizations and specific personnel (from the Organizational and Bureaucratic Politics Models).

Step 2 involves situation assessment, represented by Figure 8. This step is the direct application of the first step in the RAM, and fully embraces the critical factor of INFORMATION. A crisis is defined in part by lack of information concerning the threat and the situation. Since the RAM is an ideal system, no 'real' information system will ever yield 100% complete truth. And as the Bureaucratic Politics Models illustrates, some organizations may consciously withhold information. But a vigorous information search is needed to establish the current situation. This 'picture' also needs to be updated continuously, so that decision-makers

have the best possible information with which to make decisions. As seen in Figure 8, this situation assessment covers all possible actors and focuses on critical information requirements that will be used throughout the remaining steps of the IWG-DMG. Emerging information systems theory and technology needs to be applied to IWG operations in order to give decision-makers the most timely, accurate situational awareness possible.



**Figure 8: Step 2 - Gather Information and Assess the Situation**

It is possible to overcome some information management problems highlighted in each of the three Allison models and the Janis constraints. Links to the internet, the use of databases, analytical tools, and output production tools accomplish several things. These tools increase information flow, assist in updating situational awareness, gain access to

otherwise unknown information, and assist in portraying information in 'user-friendly formats.

Having gained situational awareness, the IWG-DMG turns to development of REQUIREMENTS, the next critical factor. Step 3 of the IWG-DMG provides a sequential process through which goals, objectives, end state and exit criteria, objectives, intent, and strategic planning guidance can be developed. This matches the next step in the RAM, focuses

organizations and personnel on essential tasks, and is the first step toward gaining ACCOUNTABILITY and SYNCHRONIZATION of agency actions.

Step 3 is a sequential method that results in several key items. Note that there is a

<b>IWG-DMG</b>	
<i>Step 3: Develop Operation's Goal, Objectives, and Planning Guidance</i>	systemic method
3.1 Describe, from NSC guidance, the task (what), purpose (why), timing, and desired results (end state) of the operation	for determining
3.2 Identify specified (stated in writing) and implied (other associated actions) tasks and purposes that should be accomplished	the overall goal
3.3 Identify limitations (things that <u>can not</u> be done or that <u>must</u> be done)	for the operation.
3.4 Identify assets available, possible effects that can be generated, and timing of those effects	Also note that
3.5 Identify where it is possible to take risk and understand the effect of risk	actions in Step 3
3.6 Understand impact of time (when actions have been directed to occur throughout the planning, preparation, and execution of the operation)	strive for
3.7 Formulate a 'word picture' of <b>desired results (end state)</b> of the operation	specificity in
3.8 Identify THE ESSENTIAL task/purpose that MUST be accomplished for the operation's success	setting
3.9 Develop goal in terms of who, what (task), when, where, why (purpose)	supporting
3.10 Formulate <b>desired exit criteria</b> , then translate into <b>objectives</b> (each objective contains task, purpose, standards)	objectives.
3.11 Formulate <b>intent</b> : Purpose (reason for conducting operation with link to NSC directive), Method ('how' operation will be conducted described in very broad, general terms), End State (from step 3.7)	'Intent' is used to reinforce
3.12 Formulate recommended planning guidance (focus effort without biasing IWG actions; should include intent of operation (items 3.7 - 3.10 above), decision timeline, considerations for development of alternatives, critical analysis factors, other items as required)	linkages between
3.13 Gain NSC approval of and publish goal, objectives, planning guidance, and alert agencies that may need advance warning of upcoming operation	

**Figure 9: Step 3 - Determine Goal, Objectives, and Issue Planning Guidance**

the goal and subordinate objectives and provide a holistic 'vision' for the operation. It also provides a guide for agencies in the use of the critical factor INITIATIVE. NSC approval acts as a check and balance to ensure decision-makers are kept informed and ensures key leaders have a chance to input to the process early on. It also provides legitimacy to the process, as a defense against self-serving organizations and individuals who might attempt to derail the process. This step satisfies the critical factor of REQUIREMENTS, enhances INFORMATION,

and retains a logical problem-solving process similar to the RAM. It also overcomes some shortfalls noted in both the Organizational and Governmental Politics Models through its use of approved, specific guidance and the use of an overarching ‘vision.’ It also sets the stage for development of synchronized alternatives and agency accountability.

Participants in current policy making see development of alternatives as a weakness of

<i>IWG-DMG</i>	the interagency system. <sup>22</sup>
<i>Step 4: Develop Holistic, Well-Defined Alternative.</i>	
<i>For each Alternative (4.A.1 thru 4.A.11; 4.B.1 thru 4.B.11; etc.)...</i>	
4.A.1 Sequence (phase) major groups of actions of agencies in time and space, in synchronized fashion, in order to accomplish goal and objectives (Begin with end state and reverse plan to present situation) Determine time/effects estimates and end states of phases	Feedback indicates that alternatives exclude key agencies, do not assign responsibilities or designate lead agencies, and fail to drive necessary agency coordination.
4.A.2 For each phase, designate main effort (action) to assist in synchronization and priority of effort and note all other significant supporting actions; determine time/effects estimates of actions	
4.A.3 Designate lead agency for each phase. For each action, identify responsible agency. Cover all major agencies that are anticipated to be involved. Add actions of other supporting agencies as time allows	
4.A.5 Establish command and control and organizational hierarchy. Establish lines of authority and reporting. Designate events where lead agency responsibility transfers	
4.A.6 Establish guidance for Rules of Engagement (if required)	
4.A.7 Outline logistical and administrative plan	
4.A.8 Outline plan for media support	
4.A.9 Outline concept for marshalling and sustaining national will, and Congressional support	
4.A.10 Specify limitations that apply and the rationale for their	
4.A.11 Specify timelines and milestones for review and assessment	
4.A.12 Develop probable contingency options (branches and sequels)	
<b>Ensure goal, objectives, intent, agency actions are tied together</b>	
<b>Develop as many <i>HOLISTIC</i> alternatives as time allows</b>	
<b>Refrain from analyzing alternatives until Step 4 is complete</b>	

**Figure 10: Step 4 - Develop Holistic, Well-Defined Alternatives**

Step 4,

development of holistic, well-defined alternatives, counters these shortfalls. Colonel Ed Filiberti has done some useful work in this area, and Step 4 is drawn from his efforts. Filiberti contends that strategic guidance should provide elements of information that appropriate

agencies need if they are to assist in coordinated foreign policy execution. His formula for strategic guidance provides the basis for development of alternatives, and can be used to inform agencies of plans once decisions are taken.<sup>23</sup>

Step 4 forces the development of the widest possible range of holistic alternatives, given

<b>IWG-DMG</b>	
<b>Step 5: Analyze, Compare, Contrast Alternatives and Draw Conclusions</b>	time available, in
5.1 Determine critical analysis factors (i.e. cost, loss of life, etc.)	order to
5.2 Analyze each alternative. For each alternative...	overcome agency
5.2.1 Select the alternative to be analyzed	parochialism and
5.2.2 Ensure applicable agencies are accounted for	individual
5.2.3 Update all information and adjust assumptions if necessary	resistance due to
5.2.4 List known critical events and decision points	limiting mental
5.2.5 Ensure all representatives understand the analytical method to be used and the critical factors that will assist in determining what alternative will be recommended	frames of
5.2.6 Select a recording technique	reference. It
5.2.7 Visualize the flow of the crisis, action by action, over time. Assess actions taken, reactions of participants, and possible future actions that can be taken. Also identify most probable events that can happen during each phase (branches) and at the completion of the operation (sequels) and list possible reactions to them	establishes
5.3 Compare alternatives	accountability
5.3.1 List critical factors to be considered in comparing alternatives	and designates
5.3.2 List outcomes of analysis, by critical factor, for each alternative	lead agencies to
5.3.3 Compare alternatives	overcome inbred
5.3.4 Conduct sensitivity analysis by weighting selected critical factors	resistance
5.4 Draw conclusions	illustrated by the
5.4.1 Describe each alternative in terms of strengths and weaknesses, in accordance with critical factors	
5.4.2 Describe most probable branches and sequels associated with each alternative, and estimated resultant effects	
5.4.3 Describe risks and issues associated with each alternative	
5.4.4 List NCA decisions/timing associated with each alternative	

**Figure 11: Step 5 - Analyze, Compare, Contrast Alternatives and Draw Conclusions**

Organizational and Bureaucratic Politics Models and the Janis constraints.

Step 5 of the IWG-DMG illustrates the use of the next critical factor, ANALYSIS.

During this step each alternative is analyzed, then all are compared in order to draw conclusions

and make recommendations. Note the INFORMATION updates, and the attempt to overcome agency protectionism and individual biases with a holistic, systemic process. Note also the focus on the integrated view of agency actions that reinforce the critical factor of ACCOUNTABILITY and promote agency SYNCHRONIZATION. Forcing development of concept for probable branches and sequels anticipates future actions, promotes INITIATIVE, ACCOUNTABILITY, and SYNCHRONIZATION, and overcomes mental inertia. Finally, conclusions drawn in Step 5 lead directly to the use of the last critical factor, RECOMMENDATIONS.

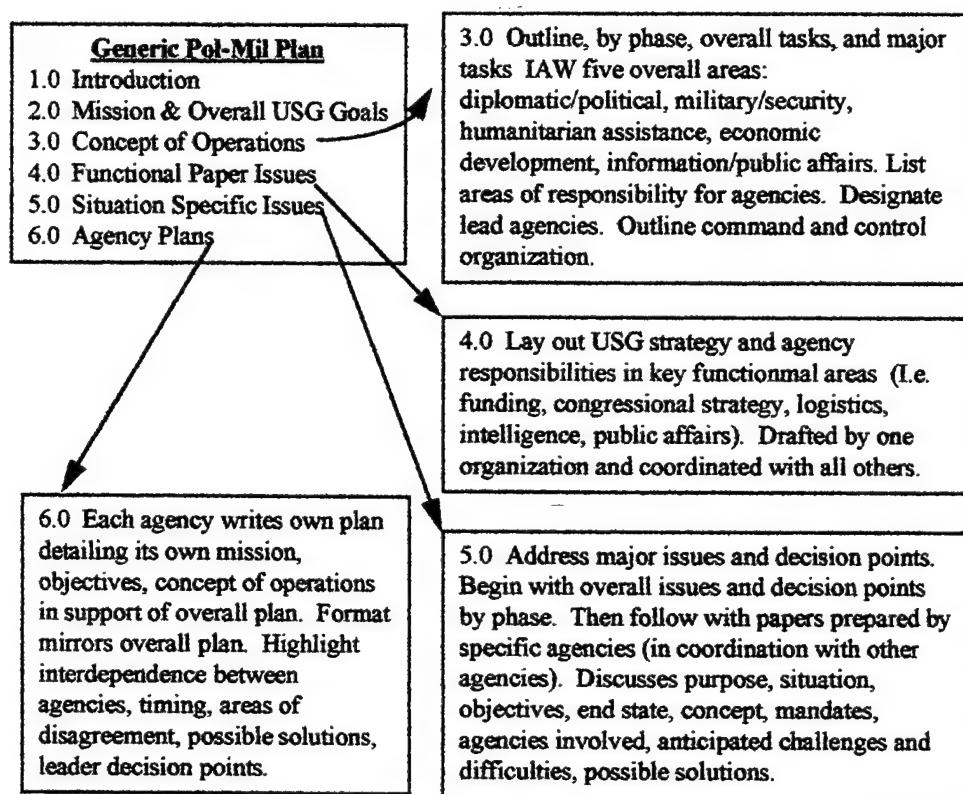
One tool that would be useful in recording analysis of alternatives and

IWG-DMG Synchronization Matrix						coordinating agency
Objective #1						actions is the synchronization
Objective #2						
Objective #3						
Time	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	End State	matrix. This recording method depicts an agency's actions over time, in relation to other agencies and stated objectives, in order to determine how and
Diplomatic Dept of State Agency B						
Military CJTF Mil to Mil Team						
Economic Agency C						
Cultural Agency D						
Informational Agency E						

Figure 12: IWG-DMG Synchronization Matrix

when effects are generated. A suggested format is depicted in Figure 12. This tool allows the planner to visualize how effects of agency actions evolve over time, in comparison with planned objectives. This tool can also be used to conduct sensitivity analysis on agency actions, and can be used to integrate the actions of multiple agencies in order to produce synergistic effects.

Steps 7 (Develop, coordinate, and synchronize Final Plans) closes out the planning section of the IWG-DMG. Step 8 (Publish and Rehearse Plan) and Step 9 (Execute and Monitor)



**Figure 13: Paragraphs 3-6 of the Pol-Mil Plan**

are adequately covered in paragraphs 3-6 of the Pol-Mil Plan, and are illustrated in Figure 13. Note that each critical factor is echoed in the written plan, the format of which overcomes problems

uncovered in examination of both the Organizational and Governmental Politics Models, and the Janis constraints.

#### *CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

Given the complex nature of IWG work, especially when focused on crises operations, a systemic decision-making guide will assist the IWG in problem-solving. Whatever the methodology used, the IWG is after a solid recommendation. A comprehensive, standardized IWG decision-making methodology could prove its worth in the inter-agency process, especially in complicated problems such as complex contingency crisis operations.

A ‘doctrinal’ methodology for IWG decision-making can give the emperor back his clothes. It can be definitive enough to guide operations, yet adaptable enough to address diverse leaders and situations. It can facilitate communications within the IWG, even throughout the higher reaches of the National Security Council system itself. It can go a long way in overcoming institutional parochialism and individual inertia. It can serve as the first step in establishing a common language and culture, standardized products, and an integrated, synchronized approach to inter-agency operations. It can drive inputs by forcing leaders to be more specific in their guidance, while serving as a catalyst for highly integrated information-gathering and products. Finally, the methodology can also serve as a baseline training aid for new action officers entering the inter-agency decision-making process.

One source recently described an IWG’s examination of the future of the Bosnia mission as a broken process. He stated that there were no common expectations, widely differing planning horizons, too many organizational biases, and numerous ‘easy-way-out decisions’ instead of tackling hard issues.<sup>24</sup> These types of problems warrant a systemic decision-making guide that transcends personal, organizational, and decision-making biases. The IWG-DMG is such a guide, a long-overdue tool that can alleviate these problems, bring agencies closer to becoming a cohesive team, and produce better recommendations. Staffers of the interagency process should be focused not on improving what ‘it’ produces, but on how ‘it’ thinks. The Pol-Mil Plan improves the product, and represents a move in the right direction. But this plan must be tied to an improved decision-making process such as the IWG-DMG, a process that applies method to the madness as IWGs confront tough issues in crises operations.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> William Clinton, Presidential Decision Directive #2: The National Security Council (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993). On pages 3-4 PDD#2 states, in part, that the NSC will "...fully analyze the issues, fairly and adequately set out the facts, consider a full range of views and options, and satisfactorily assess the prospects, risks, and implications of each.... A system of Interagency Working Groups [IWGs]...shall convene...to review and coordinate the implementation of Presidential decisions in their areas. Strict guidelines shall be established governing the operation of the Interagency Working Groups, including participants, decision-making path, and time frame."

<sup>2</sup> Paul Miller, The Interagency Process (Cambridge: Institute for Foreign Policy, 1993), 6.

<sup>3</sup> The highly appropriate fairy tale quote is from Hans Christian Andersen, Andersen's Fairy Tales, trans. Pat Shaw Iversen (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 65.

A recent review of the IAP (professor #1, non-attribution interview by author, 11 Oct 96, Carlisle Barracks, PA) broke its operations into the three stated levels.

Observations on each of these levels is contained in an excerpt from a training manual for staff officers of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Office of the Secretary of Defense, Training Program for Action Officers, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995). In this manual on page B-3, it states, "...Although the day-to-day interagency process is generally effective in producing coordinated policy options and decisions, the process has proven unable to cope with the demands of providing coordinated guidance for operations in response to a complex contingency....each agency developed and attempted to execute its own approach to an operation in relative isolation....As a result of each agency working in isolation, actions in the field were rarely coordinated, resource issues were never adequately addressed, and major elements of the mission were often ignored until well after the operation was underway."

<sup>4</sup> Comments from four different actors in the foreign policy arena illustrate the shortfalls. First, CINCs have observed that the system is ineffective. David Bradford and William Mendel, in their work entitled Interagency Cooperation - A Regional Model for Overseas Operations, McNair Paper no. 37 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1995) on page 25, note two CINC observations. One CINC observed in 1990, "National planning is a hoax - so its up to the regional CINC to do the planning." In 1993, another CINC made the remark, "We're not reactive, we're in a proactive mode. We have a strategy which supports the ambassadors in the region. [The issue is]...who are the players and can they cooperate?"

Second, professional diplomats have also voiced their opinions. A 1992 special report from the Carnegie Endowment and Institute for International Economics (Bipartisan Commission co-sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment and Institute for International Economics, "Special Report: Policymaking for a New Era," Foreign Affairs vol. 71, no. 5 (Winter 1992-93, 1992), penned in part by Secretary of State Madeline Albright, concluded on page 175 that the existing national security system makes it virtually impossible to develop a coherent and effective strategy for the post-Cold War era.

## END NOTES (cont'd)

Third, respected 'think tanks' have also expressed their misgivings. In March, 1996, RAND became an outspoken critic of the IAP on page 4 of its report when it said, "The U.S. interagency process remains fraught with competition and confusion. It lacks authority and accountability....Neither the military nor the civilian agencies are sufficiently familiar with each others' capabilities, objectives, or limitations to effectively coordinate their activities. Moreover, there is mutual institutional resistance to such coordination."

Finally, an excerpt from the IAP training program for OSD action officers shows how frustrating the system can be when it says on page B-3, "...The process involves extensive coordination...The benefit of the process is that it is thorough and inclusive...The drawback is that it can be slow and cumbersome ...[and] when the interagency has to manage a crisis, the inefficiencies inherent in the normal workings of the interagency process are crippling."

<sup>5</sup> Many sources illustrate problems with the IAP. Two are used here. First, interviews confirm the problems with the IAP (from the author's notes of non-attribution lectures and telephone interviews by author; and non-attribution personal interviews with members of the AWC faculty, 11 Oct 96, Carlisle Barracks, PA).

Second, George Raach and Ilana Kaas, in their recent article entitled "National Power and the Interagency Process," Joint Force Quarterly 119 (May 1993), observe on pages 10-11 that problems are evident in the process, personalities involved, and structure of the inter-agency process. They point out that membership in an IWG is not fixed, causing transient personnel involved in the process to generally have little experience in crisis operations. Personalities tend to dominate IWG operations, especially if process management is ineffective. Dominant personalities can drive precedence of personal over organizational views and inject biases into information processing. The IWG chair sometimes lacks experience in goal setting, meeting management, action coordination, or worse yet, plain old leadership. Finally, feedback from decision-makers is sometimes poor and slow in coming.

<sup>6</sup> Irving Janis, Crucial Decisions (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Allison, Essence of Decision - Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> Irving Janis and Leon Mann, Decision-Making (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1977), 11-14; and Irving Janis, Crucial Decisions (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1977), 14-19.

<sup>9</sup> Janis, Decisions, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, 32-34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Also, as Roger Hilsman states, in "Policy-Making is Politics," in International Politics and Foreign Policy, ed. James Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), on page 233, "Very often policy is the sum of congeries of separate or only vaguely related actions. On other

## END NOTES (cont'd)

occasions, it is an uneasy, even internally inconsistent compromise among competing goals or an incompatible mixture of alternative means for achieving a single goal. There is no systemic and comprehensive study of all the implications of the grand alternatives - nor can there be...Policy changes seem to come through a series of slight modifications of existing policy...a process of trial and error...[,] a series of incremental steps. Sometimes policies are formulated...only to be skewed to an entirely different direction and purpose by those carrying them out - or they are never carried out at all."

<sup>12</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, 29-30.

<sup>13</sup> Irving Janis and Leon Mann, Decision-Making (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1977), 11-14. Janis and Mann assume that decision-makers try to the best of their abilities to arrive at the best decision possible, and make the best use of their information gathering and processing capabilities. Given these assumptions, the criteria for highly vigilant decision-making processes are those that:

- (1) thoroughly canvas a wide range of courses of alternative courses of action;
- (2) survey the full range of objectives to be fulfilled and the values implicated by the choice;
- (3) carefully weigh what they know about the costs and risks of negative consequences, that could flow from each alternative;
- (4) intensively search for new information relevant to further evaluation of the alternatives;
- (5) correctly assimilate and take into account of any new information or expert judgment to which they are exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action that they initially prefer;
- (6) reexamine the positive and negative consequences of all known alternatives, including those originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice;
- (7) make detailed provisions for implementing or executing the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various risks were to materialize.

The term 'vigilant' is drawn from Janis. He defines vigilant information processing as a methodology that incorporates all of the factors he outlines (listed above). He goes as far to suggest that each of his criteria should be used to evaluate a decision based on a sliding scale of zero to ten. Theoretically, a highly vigilant decision could receive a 'Janis score' of 70 if all criteria were employed to the maximum extent possible. The minimum theoretical 'Janis score' for a decision would approach zero if the decision-maker made a purely intuitive decision.

The author took the Janis idea and extrapolated it to cover decision-making methodologies. Furthermore, each of the adjusted criteria MUST be present or no decision can be made (i.e. there MUST be information, an alternative, and a recommendation of a plan of some sort). Even a truncated decision-making process contains elements of all criteria.

Janis also discusses decisions that would purposely be made without attempting to maximize the 'Janis score.' He states that these decisions would normally be made under time

## END NOTES (cont'd)

or other resource constraints, would result from peculiarities of the decision-maker, or would be the result of decision-makers not attempting to remain unbiased. This will be accounted for in the critical factor of VERSATILITY, and in the assumption that decision-makers are always trying to maximize the positive effects of their decision in any particular situation (given time and other resource constraints).

<sup>14</sup> Henry Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," in International Politics and Foreign Policy, ed. James Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 261.

<sup>15</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, 78-96.

<sup>16</sup> David Bradford and William Mendel, Interagency Cooperation - A Regional Model for Overseas Operations, McNair paper No. 37 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1995), 13-17.

<sup>17</sup> On page 263 of his "Domestic Structure" article (in Rosenau), Kissinger said, "The purpose of bureaucracy is to devise a standard operating procedure which can cope effectively with most problems....Bureaucracy becomes an obstacle when what it defines as routine does not address the most significant range of issues or when its prescribed mode of action proves irrelevant to the problem....When this occurs...the analysis of where one is overwhelms the consideration of where one should be going. Serving the machine becomes a more absorbing occupation than defining its purpose....Certainty is purchased at the cost of creativity....What passes for planning is frequently the projection of the familiar into the future... [T]here is a bias against novel conceptions which are difficult to adapt to an administrative mold...[O]nce the decision-making apparatus has disgorged a policy, it becomes very difficult to change it."

<sup>18</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, 144-145.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 162-181.

<sup>20</sup> Irving Janis, Groupthink (Boston, MA: Houghton Miflin Co., 1982), 2-13.

<sup>21</sup> The Pol-Mil Plan was developed by OSD to counter IADMP shortfalls in development of objectives, concepts of operation, coordination, and delineation of responsibilities for complex contingency crisis operations. It was used successfully in the Haiti peace operations and is still underdevelopment as an IWG tool.

The Pol-Mil Plan grew out of the perceived need to develop and coordinate synchronized foreign policy plans for complex contingency operations. Review of lessons learned in foreign policy execution for Bosnia and Somalia revealed what many had already known: there was no unified effort. Hundreds of agencies were involved in hundreds of separate projects. No single agency stepped forward to lead in planning, coordination, or execution. Agency actions were not nearly as effective as if they had been properly coordinated and synchronized. There had to be a better way.

#### **END NOTES (cont'd)**

During the Haiti crisis, the IWG tested a new concept: development of a campaign plan that described goals to be accomplished, methods to be employed, agencies that were responsible, and coordination that was necessary to make the campaign a success. Post-Haiti lessons learned demonstrated the success of the emerging foreign policy campaign plan, which has evolved into its current form, the Pol-Mil Plan. The Pol-Mil Plan is currently being staffed as a draft PDD.

The Pol-Mil Plan is not a decision-making process. It does not compare favorably with the criteria outlined in the preceding section of this paper. Therefore, it can not act as a guide to decision-making. It does, however, include useful information and recommendations, establish accountability, and provide a vehicle for synchronizing agency actions. Its format is versatile enough to adapt to changing situations. But the Pol-Mil Plan is not a decision-making guide, it is a format for recording the plan once the decision is made. Therefore, it is an output, not a process.

<sup>22</sup> This conclusion is drawn from several non-attribution interviews with both observers and participants in the interagency process.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Filiberti, "National Strategic Guidance: Do We Need a Standard Format?" Parameters 25 (Autumn 1995), 47-52.

<sup>24</sup> Non-attribution comments from Pentagon-based staffer, 16 April 1997.



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